leading the way

2003-2004 ALBERTA ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Alberta

message from the minister

In a word, the 2003-2004 fiscal year was one of **leadership** for Alberta Environment and its partner organizations. Together, we made significant progress in protecting, preserving and enhancing our air, land and water resources.

This *Highlights* booklet presents a snapshot of the Department's accomplishments. It acknowledges some of the Ministry's major initiatives, such as the *Water for Life* strategy and the *Climate Change and Emissions Management Act*, and also pays tribute to the smaller, less-visible projects we devoted our time to, as we build a solid foundation for the future of our environment.

Alberta Environment takes pride in its leadership role and recognizes that protecting the environment for future generations is not the sole responsibility of government, but a shared responsibility. Together we can build on our success to ensure Albertans continue to lead the way in environmental stewardship and enjoy a clean, healthy environment for years to come.

Lorne Taylor

Lorne Taylor, Ph. D.
Minister
Alberta Environment

105-05153/

ALBERTA ENVIRONMENT PURSUES PROACTIVE CLIMATE CHANGE SOLUTIONS THAT ENABLE A PROSPEROUS ECONOMY.

protecting our air

Albertans & Climate Change: Taking Action

The *Climate Change and Emissions Management Act* was passed in the Legislature during the 2003 fall session. Alberta is the first jurisdiction in Canada with climate change-specific legislation. The Act provides the framework for implementing Alberta's action plan on climate change and strengthens and complements Alberta's existing legislation on environmental protection and resource management related to greenhouse gas emissions by providing:

- An overall emission target for Alberta with targets for specific sectors of the province's economy to be established by negotiated agreements
- A toolkit of options to facilitate sectoral agreements and to focus on cost-effective reductions in Alberta
- A framework for how emissions offsets will be worked into Alberta's regulatory requirements.

www.gov.ab.ca/env/climate/actionplan/index.html

Clean Air Strategic Alliance

In March 2004, the government committed to implement recommendations made by the Clean Air Strategic Alliance (CASA) that ensure emissions of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, mercury and particulate matter will continue to be reduced over the coming decades. Adopting these regulations makes Alberta a leader in emissions standards for electricity generation in North America. Alberta Environment co-chaired the CASA team working on this project, consisting of industry, government and non-government stakeholders.

ALBERTANS EXPECT SOUND MANAGEMENT OF THE PROVINCE'S NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT.

protecting our land

Electronics Recycling

In November and December 2003, Alberta Environment held stakeholder workshops and public surveys to develop a provincial electronics stewardship program, similar to the programs in place for tires, used oil products and beverage containers. Stakeholder support for a provincial program was extensive and broad-based. Following consultation, a formal program proposal was submitted for government review. In March 2004, the government approved a province-wide electronics recycling program. The program was implemented October 1, 2004.

Operation CleanFarm

Alberta Environment teamed with CropLife Canada, the Agriculture and Food Council of Alberta, Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development, the Canadian Association of Agri Retailers, the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties and several producer groups to launch Operation CleanFarm, a free pesticide disposal program for Alberta farmers. In 2003, more than 90 tonnes of potentially hazardous crop protection products were removed from Alberta land during Operation CleanFarm.

www.gov.ab.ca/env/protenf/pesticide/cleanfarm/index.html

Community Roundups

Household hazardous wastes consist of solid or liquid materials, or containers holding gasses, which have outlived their usefulness and require special handling and treatment in the way they are discarded. They may be flammable, corrosive, or toxic. In 2003-2004, 115 community-sponsored roundups were held to collect household hazardous waste. Nearly 974,000 litres of materials were collected and disposed of at the Swan Hills Treatment Centre. Over 151,650 aerosol cans were processed during the year.

ALBERTANS ARE ASSURED SAFE, SECURE DRINKING WATER, HEALTHY AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS AND A RELIABLE WATER SUPPLY.

preserving our water

Water for Life: Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability

In November 2003, after extensive consultation and public discussion, Alberta Environment released the *Water for Life* strategy, a comprehensive plan outlining a series of actions aimed at assuring Albertans have safe, secure drinking water, healthy aquatic ecosystems and a reliable water supply to support provincial economic development. The plan focuses on knowledge and research, partnerships and water conservation, and shapes the future of water management and decision-making in Alberta.

www.waterforlife.gov.ab.ca

Advisory Committee on Water Use Practice and Policy

As part of the *Water For Life* strategy, in September 2003, Alberta Environment formed the Advisory Committee on Water Use Practice and Policy to review the policies and practices associated with industrial activities that remove water from the active hydrologic cycle. In October 2004, the committee submitted its final recommendations to the Government of Alberta.

www.waterforlife.gov.ab.ca

ALBERTA HAS CLEAR RULES AND STANDARDS THAT ARE STRICTLY ENFORCED.

improving and enforcing environmental regulations

Environmental Protection and Enhancement Amendment Act

Alberta Environment introduced the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Amendment Act*, which improves the Ministry's regulatory process by:

- Strengthening Alberta Environment's ability to adopt and enforce Codes of Practice;
- Streamlining and expanding Alberta's Upstream Oil and Gas Reclamation and Remediation Program to address both surface issues and potential contamination; and
- Providing municipalities and industry the option of reporting environmental incidents electronically and giving Alberta Environment investigators immediate access to critical incident details.

Joint Hearings of Shell Jackpine and CNRL Horizon Oil Sands Projects: Fort McMurray

Alberta Environment chaired the government panel at the joint federal/provincial Energy and Utilities Board and Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency hearings for the CNRL Horizon and Shell Jackpine oil sands projects in the fall of 2003. The purpose of the regulatory hearings was to assess the environmental and socioeconomic impacts of construction and operation of these oil sands mining projects in the Fort McMurray area, and to determine if these projects were in the public's interest. Other participants recognized Alberta Environment as playing a valuable role at the hearings. Joint panel decision reports were issued in early 2004, approving the projects.

Approvals Review Project

Since 1993, when the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act* was enacted, Alberta Environment has issued approvals with a maximum expiry date of 10 years. To address the increase in approval renewal applications beginning in 2003, an Approvals Review Project Team was formed to develop and implement options for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of Alberta Environment's regulatory framework. The project team consulted with stakeholders on the proposed changes through information sessions, letters and the Internet. Phase One of the work was completed in 2003-2004 and resulted in a reduction of over 1,000 applications to Alberta Environment over the next five years. Phase Two will be implemented in 2004-2005.

Upstream Oil and Gas Reclamation and Remediation Program

Alberta Environment consulted with landowners, industry and other affected stakeholders to identify how the Upstream Oil and Gas Reclamation Program could be improved. As a result, on October 1, 2003, Alberta Environment expanded the program to include specific requirements for the assessment and remediation of contamination. The program, which applies to all upstream oil and gas facilities including well sites, batteries and pipelines on private and public land, will be reviewed annually to ensure opportunities for improvement are identified and addressed.

ALBERTANS SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT.

our partner organizations

Alberta Environment is continuously working alongside partner organizations such as the Alberta Recycling Management Authority, the Alberta Used Oil Management Association and the Beverage Container Management Board, to encourage Albertans to reduce their personal waste by recycling, participating in waste roundups and composting kitchen, garden and yard waste.

ALBERTA ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS EMPLOYEES' ONGOING DEVELOPMENT TO ACHIEVE SHARED AND INDIVIDUAL POTENTIAL.

our people

Occupational Health and Safety

Alberta Environment continues to emphasize its commitment to Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S). The total number of OH&S incidents in Alberta Environment decreased from nine incidents with 35 lost-time days in 2002, to one incident with one lost-time day in 2003.

Staff Development

Alberta Environment made the equivalent of five per cent of payroll dollars available to actively encourage ongoing professional and personal learning and development opportunities for staff. In 2003-2004, 92 per cent of Alberta Environment employees used their Learning Accounts to support continuing development.

Healthy Workplace

Through a series of workshops in spring 2003, Alberta Environment staff identified nine broad areas for enhancement to ensure a healthy work environment in the Ministry. In September 2003, a Healthy Workplace Advisory Committee was formed to make recommendations for enhancing workplace health.

providing timely information

Water Websites

In 2003-2004, Alberta Environment launched new websites for water quantity, water conservation and surface water quality. The water quantity website provides a sound base of knowledge concerning both groundwater and surface water quantity in Alberta.

www.gov.ab.ca/env/water/gwsw/quantity/index.cfm

The water conservation website provides information on the value of water, the users of water and conservation activities for residential, industrial/commercial/institutional and agricultural users.

www.gov.ab.ca/env/water/conservation/index.cfm

Alberta Environment's new surface water quality website offers information about the province's surface water quality, and how it is studied and monitored. It provides information on water quality conditions in the province's many lakes, rivers and reservoirs. The new website also features the provincial Surface Water Quality Guidelines, shows how the Surface Water Quality Index is calculated and applied, and outlines procedures for obtaining data on lakes and rivers in the province.

www.gov.ab.ca/env/water/swq/

Information Centre

The Information Centre for the Ministries of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development provided the following services to members of the public during 2003-2004:

- responded to 1,923 e-mail requests
- handled 19,521 telephone calls
- served 10,178 walk-in visitors
- distributed 5,052 Ministry publications

www.gov.ab.ca/env/info/infocentre/index.cfm

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Office (FOIP)

The FOIP office received 823 access requests for information from Alberta Environment in the 2003-2004 fiscal year. This compares with 748 requests from the previous year.

www.gov.ab.ca/env/dept/foip.html

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Alberta Environment

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